



NEWS RELEASE

February 18, 2003

Smuggler Flees Checkpoint, Drives Off-Road to Avoid Capture

More than 700 Pounds of Marijuana Worth Half-Million Dollars Discovered

CHULA VISTA, Calif. – A drug smuggler who sped away from a Border Patrol checkpoint was taken in custody after leaving paved roads and striking a large boulder Monday afternoon. Over 700 pounds of marijuana were discovered inside the disabled vehicle.

Agents noticed the smuggler's suspicious 1995 Ford F-250 truck on San Diego County road S-2 near the Aguas Calientes airport, a route frequently used by smugglers attempting to circumvent the I-15 checkpoint, at about 4:45 p.m. They followed the vehicle to the Border Patrol's Scissors checkpoint, where the driver was instructed to pull over for inspection.

Ignoring the agents, the driver accelerated from the checkpoint, heading eastbound on SR-78. Border Patrol agents that had been following him attempted to catch up, but dropped back when the driver recklessly passed a semi-truck on a blind curve.

The smuggler's truck was soon spotted leaving the paved road in an attempt to flee cross-country. The driver, realizing that the route he had chosen was slowing him down, soon turned back towards Highway 78. The vehicle struck several large boulders as the driver tried to get back on the road, and was disabled.

Agents approached the vehicle and apprehended the driver, a 35-year-old U.S. citizen. A total of 154 bundles of marijuana weighing about 722 pounds were located in the bed of the truck. The estimated national street value of the seizure is more than \$505,000. Since Oct. 1, 2002, Border Patrol agents in the San Diego Sector have seized more than 9,500 pounds of marijuana valued at more than \$6.7 million.

The driver, vehicle and contraband were transported to the Temecula Border Patrol station where they were turned over to the Drug Enforcement Administration North County Task Force.

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